1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

64. On subsequent occasions I tried, by more devious methods, to persuade individual Iban to let me survey their farms—but without success. I discovered however, that it was the surveyor's chain to which most objection was taken. By using a prismatic compass and a measuring line of fine twine, I did manage to make hurried and surreptitious surveys of several farms (*umai*), but finding myself under suspicion, I was obliged to abandon even this. Finally I resorted to pacing—with as nonchalant an air as I could command—and sights taken from the shelter of friendly stumps. Despite this ban on surveying, I was permitted to visit most of the farms of Rumah Nyala whenever I chose (provided, of course, that I obeyed the various *pemali*), and when it was found that I was seriously interested in Iban methods, I was invited to many more *padi* rituals than I had time to attend. It is when the *padi* is being sown, and during the early stages of growth that ritual prohibitions are at their most stringent, and during these periods two *bilek* families would not allow me to set foot on their farms; but in these cases, the prohibition (*pemali ngendik tegalan*) also applied to most of the other members of the long-house. Later in the year these restrictions were relaxed however, so that in course of time I was able to make repeated and detailed inspections of all farms. As will be seen later, repeated visits were always necessary, first to plot the area of jungle felled, and then to mark in the actual extent of the *padi* crop. In the course of successive visits I was able to compile a series of sketch maps. In almost all cases these maps were based on a series of measurements—by pacing—of the major dimensions of a farm, and then, the sketching in of its outline and other principal features, from several different vantage points (i.e. adjacent spurs and ridges). This method was aided by the fact that the boundaries of Iban farm plots are always very plainly demarcated against the surrounding jungle from which they have been cleared. In only two instances was it possible to make more elaborate surveys, and both were clandestine operations, undertaken soon after reaping had been completed. In general then, my data on farm acreages are based on sketch maps and careful estimates, not (as I had planned) on detailed plane-table surveys. In passing it may be noted that the survey of Iban hill farms is no easy task. Very often they are situated on extremely steep slopes (i.e. 35°—40°), broken by confined and precipitous gullies and cluttered with massive accumulations of fallen timber.

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65. One of my leading reasons for selecting Rumah Nyala as the centre of my research was that all of its farms could be reached directly, and on foot, from the main long-house. For the Baleh region this is an unusual state of affairs. As already explained, each *bilek* family operates as an independent unit, and commonly the farms of a long-house community are scattered up and down the banks, and tucked away in the side streams, of a section of river from three to four miles in length. More often than not the river is broken by rapids and shoals which inhibit travel unless a well-manned canoe be available, and this is very difficult to come by when the Iban are living on their farms and pre-occupied with their *padi*. The farms of Rumah Koh, in the Ulu Baleh, for example, are strung out over several miles of river, and some of them are distant five or more

243x 121

owners as well as the soul of the rice." Izikowitz continued his survey, using a lance instead of a pole—the spirits (so it was said) being afraid of the point of the lance; but within a few days the owner of the land did fall ill, and Izikowitz was absolutely forbidden to continue with his mapping. (Izikowitz, "Lamet," 1951, p. 282). 171

A Government surveyor, by exerting sufficient pressure, might possibly get his way, but an anthropologist could not afford to do this, for the success of his work depends on the maintenance of goodwill among the people he is living with and studying.